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IMITATION OF SUPERVISORS AS A FACTOR IN TEACHERS' CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR.

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TO DETERMINE IF A TEACHER'S INCIDENTAL IMITATION OF THE VERBAL BEHAVIOR PATTERNS OF HIS SUPERVISOR INFLUENCES HIS OWN CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR AND IF CERTAIN TEACHERS ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE THAN OTHERS TO THIS INFLUENCE, THE MINNESOTA TEACHER ATTITUDE INVENTORY AND THE PRELIMINARY SITUATION TEST (AN INSTRUMENT DESIGNED TO MEASURE THE PREFERENCE FOR INDIRECT VERSUS DIRECT RESPONSES) WERE ADMINISTERED TO 193 GRADE 1 THROUGH 9 TEACHERS. INDIRECT VERBAL BEHAVIOR IS DEFINED AS THAT WHICH EXPANDS THE STUDENTS' FREEDOM OF ACTION, WHEREAS DIRECT VERBAL BEHAVIOR RESTRICTS ACTION. ON THE BASIS OF SIGNIFICANTLY SIMILAR SCORES ON THESE INSTRUMENTS, EACH OF TWO TREATMENT GROUPS (GROUP A AND GROUP B), APPROXIMATELY EQUAL IN AGE, SEX, LEVEL OF TRAINING, AND NUMBER OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, ENGAGED IN A DISCUSSION PERIOD IN WHICH ALL THE CONDITIONS WERE IDENTICAL EXCEPT FOR THE VERBAL BEHAVIOR OF THE EXPERIMENTER (SIMULATED SUPERVISOR), WHERE GROUP A WAS PREDOMINANTLY INDIRECT, AND GROUP B PREDOMINANTLY DIRECT. THE TAPED SITUATION TEST (14 TAPE RECORDED EPISODES OF A SIXTH-GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS) WAS THEN ADMINISTERED AND THE TWO GROUPS WERE ASKED TO RATE, ON A FIVE-POINT SCALE, THE APPROPRIATENESS OF TWO INDIRECT AND TWO DIRECT RESPONSES THE CLASSROOM TEACHER MIGHT HAVE MADE TO SITUATIONS IN EACH EPISODE. GROUP A'S RESPONSES WERE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE INDIRECT, VERIFYING THE HYPOTHESIS THAT A SUPERVISOR'S VERBAL BEHAVIOR PATTERNS MAY AFFECT THE TEACHER'S BEHAVIOR. (AW)

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# IMITATION OF SUPERVISORS AS A FACTOR IN TEACHERS' CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

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This study was designed to test the hypotheses that a teacher's incidental imitation of the patterns of verbal behavior of his supervisor influences his own classroom behavior, and that certain teachers are more susceptible than others to this influence. The focus of the study was on the indirect-direct dimension of verbal interaction as defined by Flanders.[1]

> Indirect verbal behavior of the teacher is defined as that which has the effect of expanding the students' freedom of action. This includes asking questions with the intent that students will answer; accepting, clarifying and using students' ideas and opinions; praising student action or behavior; and accepting and clarifying students' feelings.
>
> Direct verbal behavior is that which has the effect of restricting the students' freedom of action. This includes making statements of fact and of the teacher's ideas and opinions (lecturing); giving directions or orders to which the students are expected to comply; and criticizing student behavior and justifying the teacher's authority.

In order to provide controls for (1) some of the variables which could affect an individual teacher's classroom behavior, and (2) the conditions which could lead to imitative behavior, a laboratory type experimental design was used. Differences among individual

[1]Flanders, Ned A., Teacher Influence, Pupil Attitudes, and Achievement. Cooperative Research Monograph No. 12, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965.

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teachers, differences in teaching situations, and differences among supervisors and supervisor-teacher relationships were taken into account.

The subjects were the teachers from four junior high and six elementary schools in seven different school districts in southeastern Michigan. The size of the school districts varied in total enrollment from 2,225 to 24,950. The individual schools ranged in size from 377 to 900 pupils, with from 14 to 50 teachers. Complete data were collected from 102 elementary and 91 junior high teachers, making a total of 193 teachers.

The Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory and the Preliminary Situation Test, (an instrument designed for this study to measure the teachers' preferences for indirect versus direct teacher responses) were administered to all of the teachers. The teachers in each school were then assigned to one of two treatment groups in such a manner that the means and variances of the MTAI scores and of the PST scores for each group were not significantly different. This also resulted in the two treatment groups being essentially equal with respect to a number of other characteristics of the teachers, including age, sex, level of training, and number of years of experience.

Two contrasting experimental treatments were created, one for each group, in which all the conditions were identical except for the verbal behavior of the experimenter. During a twenty-minute discussion period with Treatment Group A, the experimenter's pattern of verbal behavior was predominantly indirect; and during a similar discussion period with Group B the experimenter employed a style of verbal behavior which was predominantly direct. The content of this discussion

in both treatments was focused on background information for the tape-recorded classroom episodes which the teachers were about to hear. Attention was given to the characteristics of the class which was represented, the subject matter being studied, the objectives for that particular grade level, etc. At no time was any particular style of teacher behavior advocated or discussed.

The Taped Situation Test (TST) which was administered to all the teachers following the discussion period consisted of 14 short, tape-recorded episodes of a sixth grade social studies class. Four possible responses which the teacher might have made were provided for each episode, two of them being examples of indirect and two of direct verbal behavior. The teachers in the experiment then indicated their opinions as to the appropriateness of each of the responses by rating it on a five-point scale from strongly approve to strongly disapprove. In scoring the TST the ratings given to the "direct" responses were reversed, resulting in a total score which could be used as an index of a teacher's preferences for indirect versus direct verbal behavior--the higher the score, the greater his preference for indirect verbal behavior.

## Results

Since all the factors which could be expected to influence the teachers' responses to the TST were equal for both treatment groups except for the experimenter's pattern of verbal behavior, the assumption was made that any differences in TST scores between the two groups could be attributed to the influence of this factor. It was

predicted that the TST scores of Group A would be higher than those of Group B because of the tendency of the teachers to imitate the style of the experimenter.

These data are presented in Table 1. The difference was in the predicted direction and was significant at the .05 level (a one-tailed test).

Table 1

DIFFERENCE IN TST SCORES BETWEEN THE TWO TREATMENT GROUPS

| Treatment Group | TST Scores | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | N | $\bar{X}$ | $s^2$ |
| A | 96 | 42.3 | 224.11 |
| B | 97 | 38.3 | 276.71 |
| Diff. | | 4.0 | |
| | t = 1.76 (P < .05) | | |

Separate analyses of the data from the elementary and the junior high teachers is presented in Table 2 The difference between treatments for the elementary teachers was highly significant, and there was no difference for the junior high teachers.

Table 2

DIFFERENCES IN TST SCORES BETWEEN TREATMENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH TEACHERS

| Treatment Group | Elementary Teachers | | | Junior High Teachers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | $\bar{X}$ | $s^2$ | N | $\bar{X}$ | $s^2$ |
| A | 52 | 44.9 | 163.14 | 44 | 39.1 | 283.19 |
| B | 50 | 37.4 | 217.44 | 47 | 39.2 | 344.22 |
| Diff. | 7.5 | | | -0.1 | | |
| | t = 2.77 (P < .005) | | | N.S. | | |

It was also predicted that those teachers who had low scores on the MTAI would have a greater tendency to imitate the behavior of the experimenter than would those who had high MTAI scores. (The authors of the MTAI concluded that "those who make low scores are essentially insecure socially . . . and they frequently have submissive, uncritical attitude toward authorities over them.")[2]

Data relevant to this hypothesis are presented in Table 3 and Table 4. For the total sample the differences among levels of MTAI scores was in the predicted direction, but the interaction of Treatments x Levels was not significant (F = .92). In the case of the elementary teachers the differences between treatments were substantially the same for all levels of MTAI scores.

There was no evidence that the difference in TST scores between treatments was related to any of the other factors for which data were available, such as age, sex, level of preparation, and years of experience.

Any generalizations of these results to actual practice would be dependent upon the extent to which there is a relationship between the teachers' indicated preferences on the TST and their spontaneous, overt behavior in the classroom, and upon the extent to which the experimenter-teacher relationship in the study is representative of supervisor-teacher relationships.

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[2]Cook, Walter W., Carroll H. Leeds and Robert Callis, Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory Manual. New York: The Psychological Corporation, 1951.

Table 3

DIFFERENCES IN TST SCORES BETWEEN TREATMENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH TEACHERS WITH LOW, MEDIUM AND HIGH MTAI SCORES

| Treatment Group | MTAI Scores | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Lower 1/3 | | Middle 1/3 | | Upper 1/3 | |
| | N | $\bar{X}$ | N | $\bar{X}$ | N | $\bar{X}$ |
| **Elementary Teachers** | | | | | | |
| A | 10 | 34.7 | 24 | 46.4 | 18 | 48.6 |
| B | 11 | 27.5 | 20 | 38.3 | 19 | 42.4 |
| Diff | | 7.2 | | 8.1 | | 6.2 |
| **Junior High Teachers** | | | | | | |
| A | 22 | 33.3 | 11 | 42.5 | 11 | 47.4 |
| B | 22 | 27.4 | 9 | 41.2 | 16 | 54.3 |
| Diff. | | 5.9 | | 1.3 | | 6.9 |
| **All Teachers** | | | | | | |
| A | 32 | 33.7 | 35 | 45.2 | 29 | 48.1 |
| B | 33 | 27.4 | 29 | 39.2 | 35 | 47.8 |
| Diff. | | 6.3<br>t = 2.10<br>(P < .025) | | 6.0<br>t = 1.70<br>(P < .05) | | 0.3<br>N.S. |

Table 4

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF TST SCORES BY TREATMENTS AND LEVELS OF MTAI SCORES

| Source | SS | df | MS | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Treatments | 853 | 1 | 853 | 4.29 | < .05 |
| Among Levels | 10,054 | 2 | 5,027 | 25.31 | |
| Interaction (T x L) | 367 | 2 | 183.5 | .92 | N.S. |
| Within Groups (error) | 37,135 | 187 | 198.6 | | |
| Total | 48,409 | 192 | | | |